(b) and (c) The Federation has, interalia, suggested the following for rationalising the provisions of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954:

(i) Penalties be graded according to the gravity of offence — The provisions specifying minimum punishment should be deleted.

(ii) Imported food articles should not be subjected to the provisions of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and certificate issued by the exporting country with regard to the nature and quality of food imported should be deemed to be sufficient compliance of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act in India.

(iii) Provisions be made permitting appointment of more than one nominee by a company.

(iv) Prosecution of manufacturer/supplier alone in certain situations when vendor does not seem to be responsible for the offence.

(d) The Report of the Task Force has been examined by the Government in consultation with the Central Committee on Food Standards, a Statutory Committee set up under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954 and the representatives of Confederation of Indian Food Trade and Industry (CIFTI) and the process for initiating modifications has commenced.

Sub-critical nuclear tests conducted by USA

*335. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 190 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 24th July, 1997, and state:

(a) what is the precise nature and number of sub-critical nuclear tests conducted so far by the USA; and

(b) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) On July 2, 1997, the United States conducted one sub-critical nuclear test condenamed 'Rebound' at its test site in Nevada. The test has been called "sub-critical" because no critical mas is formed during the experiment which can lead to a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction.

(b) Government have taken note of the "sub-critical" underground nuclear test and expressed concern that this has been justified "as an activity permitted under the CTBT". These developments confirm the validity of India's concerns expressed during the CTBT negotiations, as well as our eventual decision last year, that India could not be a party to such a treaty. India however continues to remain committed to achieving genuine nuclear disarmament in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner.

Medical collaboration between SRMC, Chennai and HMS, USA

*336 SHRI AKHILESH DAS: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state: (a) whether Government are aware that Shri Ramachandra Medical College (SRMC), Chennai, has tied-up with the Harvard Medical School of USA, for collaborative efforts in the key areas of medical education, research, treatment and transfer of information, as reported in the Hindu, dated the 27th July, 1997;

(b) whether an agreement to this effect has since been signed between the representatives of the SRMC and the Harvard School; and

(c) if so, what are the broad features of the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (c). An agreement between Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute, Chennai (a deemed University) and Harvard Medical International inc. (HMI) was signed on 11th February 1997 to become effective from 1-4-97 for a period of 5 years. The agreement broadly envisages the utilization of the expertise available in the Harvard Medical School for strengthening medical education and research facilities at the Deemed University; utilizing such services for enhancing the quality of clinical care services; providing opportunities to at least two students nominated by the Deemed University to pursue further education and training at the Harvard Medical School, and providing an opportunity to the faculty members of the Deemed University for short term exposure to the various aspects of the Harvard Medical System.

The Central Government communicated its no objection to the proposal subject to the condition that no financial commitments would devolve upon the Government or the University Grants Commission and the payments would be made as per Reserve Bank of India Regulations. The organisers had assured the Medical Council of India that the collaboration is purely an academic one and no commercial benefits are to be derived from it.

Disparity in the Pay Scales of Hindi and English Stenographers in NBCC, etc.

*337. SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA:
SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state: (a) whether there is a wide disparity between the pay scales of Hindi and English Stenographers in NBCC, HUDCO and Hindustan Prefab Limited (HPL);

(b) if so, the details and justification thereof;

(c) whether any steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken by Government to remove this disparity and give justice to Hindi Stenographers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI S. R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN): (a) to (d). The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the Sabha.

Preventing goods in transit from being smuggled into India

*338. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 166 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 24th July, 1997, and state as to how do Government plan to prevent goods from the transit route between Nepal and Bangladesh via Phulbari, from being smuggled into India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): The operating modalities and working arrangements of the transit route between Nepal and Bangladesh via Phulbari are presently being worked out by Government of India in consultation with the Government of Nepal. The operating modalities are nearing finalisation. All due care will be taken to ensure that smuggling of goods from the proposed transit route does not take place.

Reciprocal recognition of BDS degrees by India, Romania, UK and Australia

*339. SHRI PARAG CHARARHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 964 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 31st July, 1997, and state:

(a) whether Romania, UK and Australia recognise BDS degrees conferred by Indian Universities and vice-versa;